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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY



CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

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SOVIET PREPARATIONS FOR EARLY LAUNCHING OF AN EARTH SATELLITE

A number of public statements by Soviet authorities concerning earth satellites suggest that the USSR intends to launch an earth satellite soon, possibly in the early phases of the International Geophysical Year (IGY) which begins on 1 July. This program, though it is of major proportions, probably will not interfere seriously with the long-range ballistic missile effort.

A. N. Nesmeyanov, president of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, reported in Komsomol Pravda on 9 June that the USSR would launch its first earth satellite "within the next few months." He was reported in the Soviet press a week earlier to have stated that the USSR now has the "necessary instruments and equipment to aid in solving the problem." However, official Soviet announcements at the Brussels conference (15-20 June) regarding IGY rocket and earth satellite plans revealed nothing new.

In September 1955, Khrushchev openly boasted that the USSR was ahead of the United States in preparations for space satellites. Soviet scientists, on the other hand, have characteristically been cautious about giving information or making official claims of leadership in the race to produce the first successful satellite. Last fall, L. I. Sedov, a leading figure in the field, is reported to have privately expressed the

opinion that the United States might be leading.

Knowing that the probability of failure of a particular launching is approximately 50 percent, it is possible that the USSR will announce a launching only after it has taken place. Timing of the announcement may be influenced by a desire not to reveal prematurely any information from which deductions might be made regarding military missile capabilities.

Since the USSR has committed itself publicly to launching an earth satellite within the next few months and is well aware of the psychological and political advantages of a "first" in this field, a major effort on its part toward this end is expected.

the USSR intends to launch earth satellites and upper atmosphere research rockets periodically and throughout the International Geophysical Year. The earth satellites will be launched in such a direction that they will be observable from all areas except the central Arctic and the central Antarctic.

The USSR probably has the capability of orbiting an earth satellite in 1957. It would be desirable though not mandatory to orbit a satellite within a week before or after the solstice period, about 21 June or 21 December, to enable better observation of the satellite at dawn and dusk. (SECRET)
(Prepared by OSI)

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PART I

OF IMMEDIATE INTEREST

Page 9 of 9

PART II

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Page 1 of 15

PART III

PATTERNS AND PERSPECTIVES

Page 1 of 6